

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants thank the Examiner for his careful review of this application. Claims 1-48 have been rejected. Claims 1, 3-9, 10-17, 19-33, 34-41, 43-48 remain pending. Claims 2, 10, 18, 34, and 42 have been cancelled. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application in view of the above amendment and the following remarks submitted in support thereof.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112:

The Examiner rejected claims 4, 20, and 36 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Although applicants believe that an “appropriate amount” is defined by the claims, Applicants have amended the claims 4, 20, and 36 to provide more clarity. Similarly Applicants have removed the term “recently” from claims 13, 29, and 45 to provide more clarity. As a result, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the 35 U.S.C. §112 , second paragraph rejection.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102:

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 10-22, 26-38, and 42-48 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as being anticipated by Cohen et al. (US Pat. 6,507,845 B1) (Cohen). The rejection is respectfully traversed. The teachings of Cohen do not teach each element of the independent claim 1 of the currently claimed invention. Independent claim 1 defines a method for accessing related items. The method involves composing a list of the related items wherein the related items are defined as objects or users. The method further involves identifying related items based on the relationship existing between the users, the users and the objects, and the objects. Then, a related item is selected from the composed list.

Cohen teaches a method for improving collaborative working among a group of people working together on a project or task involving a defined set of documents. In Cohen, the task is the project that a team is involved in. The method in Cohen provides a method to improve awareness of a status of a task by storing a first set of data representing a plurality of users involved in the task and a second set of data representing a plurality of data objects. According to Cohen, the plurality of users are the individuals that make up the team and the data objects are the documents or files involved in the task. The method in Cohen provides the individual user a way to get an update of the progress of the task by displaying the activity data in two separate windows or regions simultaneously. A first region contains a list of the plurality of users in association with an activity performed by each of the users concurrently or most recently. The second region contains a list of the plurality of data objects in association with an activity performed upon each of the plurality of data objects concurrently or most recently. Thus two windows provide a comprehensive awareness of the current or most recent activities performed by the users in the team as well as the current or most recent activity performed upon each of the documents involved in the project or task (Column 3, lines 26-37). In other words, the individuals involved in the project can get an update of the work done by the other individuals involved in the project and can access the files that need to be worked on. Furthermore, in Cohen, the clients further have a set of collaboration software tools, which interface with the applications and tool bar to allow users to select other users and documents in the displayed tool bars and to initiate collaborative work with other users or manipulation of documents (column 5 lines 11-15).

In contrast, the claimed invention provides any user access to related objects and wherein these related objects are determined using a metric which depends on different variables. The related objects are not restricted to a particular task and to particular users.

The Examiner asserts that Cohen uses a metric system to define related items. Applicants respectfully traverses the Examiner's characterization in this regard because the portion of the reference relied upon by the Examiner (FIG. 3, Column 3, lines 1-5 and Column 6, lines 6-9) does not disclose the use of a metric to identify the related items. In fact, the method involves the step of storing a first of set of data representing a plurality of users involved in the task and a second set of data representing a plurality of data objects. Moreover, the two sets of data representing users and data objects may be generated by one of the users by selecting a group of users from among a larger group (column 3, lines 4-6), i.e. selecting the few that are involved in a particular project. Therefore, the data that are being stored are pre-selected by one of the users. Cohen essentially brings together the people working as a team on a project. The stored data helps to achieve the smooth flow of a particular project.

In addition, in Cohen, the user establishes the tasks by creating a task object and associating it with a select number of documents involved in the task and a select number of users to be allocated to the task. The number of users to be allocated to a task is not the same as the metric taught in the claimed invention, as asserted by the Examiner. What Cohen is teaching is that the number of people and the documents needed to complete a task is predefined so that the people who are assigned to the tasks can keep track of the status of the tasks and collaborate with one another to work effectively. In the claimed invention, the number of users and the objects are all dynamic, are not predefined, and are not directed to a particular task as in Cohen. As such, in the claimed invention, there is no need for collaboration tools to interface with the applications and tool bar to allow users to select other users and documents in the displayed tool bars.

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicants submit that independent claim 1 is patentable under 35. U.S.C § 102 (e). As Cohen fails to teach each and every

element of the claimed invention, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 17 and 33 are patentable under 35 U.S.C § 102 (e), at least for the above-stated reasons. Furthermore, dependent claims 3-6, 11-16, 19-22, 26-32, 35-38, and 43-48, each of which directly or indirectly depends from amended independent claims 1, 17 and 33 are submitted to be patentable under 35.U.S.C § 102 (e) over Cohen for the reasons set forth above. As a result, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the 35.U.S.C § 102 (e) rejections.

Obviousness Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 7-9, 23-25, 39-41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Cohen and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,678,882 B1 to Hurley et al (Hurley). To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the reference or in the knowledge generally available, to one having ordinary skill in the art, to combine the references. Additionally, the references when combined must teach or suggest all the claim features. As discussed above, Cohen does not disclose or suggest composing a list of one or more related items i.e. users or objects, based on a relationship between the users, the users and the objects, and two objects defined by a metric. There is nothing in Hurley that would have cured any of the deficiencies pointed out above with respect to Cohen. Therefore, even if it is deemed that there would have been a proper motivation to combine the references, a proposition with which Applicants disagree, the resulting combination would not include all the claimed features of the independent claims of the claimed invention.

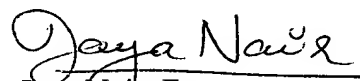
Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicants submit that dependent claims 1, 17, and 33 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the combination of Cohen and Hurley. Claims 7-9, 23-25, 39-41 which ultimately depend from the independent claims

1,17, and 33, are likewise patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over this combination for at least the same reasons set forth with respect to independent claim 1

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that all the pending claims 1, 3-9, 10-17, 19-33, 34-41, 43-48 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions concerning the present Amendment, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at (408) 749-6900 Ext 6926. If any additional fees are due in connection with the filing of this Amendment, the Commissioner is also authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-0805 (Order No. SUNMP406). A duplicate copy of the transmittal is enclosed for this purpose.

Respectfully submitted,
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